

AA# 490

846-49

UNCLASSIFIED

AFTER ACTION REPORT

81ST TANK BATTALION

5TH ARMORED DIVISION

846-49

AUGUST thru DECEMBER 44

JANUARY thru APRIL 1945

Classified by *9. gm* on *9. 59*
 by *DDP* on *5200.9*
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 JOHN L. GERRY
 Captain, Army
 Col. Sly & Col. Bandy

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SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of August 1944

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.
(Main Channel)

In compliance with Par 10 (63) AR 345-103, the following After Action Report is submitted.

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Commanding Officers:

- Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Commander
- Capt Ralph R. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co.
- Capt Donald Hearl, Cav., 0315739, Co "A"
- Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010603, Co "B"
- Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co "C"
- Capt Harold M. Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co "D"
- Capt Vieter W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
- Capt Arthur Stern, MC, 01690488, Med Det

Losses in action were very light: Eight (8) EM and One (1) Officer in action; One (1) Officer and Twenty (20) EM wounded and evacuated. No prisoners were reported captured or missing in action. One (1) Officer and Forty-Two (42) EM were wounded but remained on duty. Replacements consisting of Two (2) Officers and Seventy-Five (75) EM were received during the month.

The enemy encountered during August consisted largely of small units which were disorganized, confused, poorly equipped and with the exception of the few SS troops, offered little resistance. The enemy action was largely a rear guard delaying action. Being forced to withdraw so rapidly, they had very little time to prepare adequate defenses. Except for destroying bridges, little advantage was taken of natural obstacles. A small amount of enemy armor was encountered during this period. Most of the armor seemed to be more interested in withdrawing rather than fighting. Very little enemy air activity was observed. However on 22 Aug 44 the Task Force was bombed and strafed by Eight (8) enemy aircraft (ME109). Only light casualties were inflicted and one plane was shot down. Some enemy artillery units were encountered but they were usually not in firing position. During this month about 350 of the enemy were killed and about three (300) prisoners were taken.

During this operation the unit moved so fast and so far that it was difficult for enemy information to be obtained through normal reconnaissance channels. An artillery liaison plane (L4) was often used to reconnoiter the route of advance. Not only did this method of reconnaissance provide us with much valuable information but their presence added to the confidence of the advance elements of our force. The FFI and French civilians gave much information which proved invaluable on several occasions.

23

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On 1 Aug 44 the unit was in bivouac in the vicinity of Saint Saviour le Victome, France, when the first operational orders were received. The unit moved for the next five days in a generally Southerly direction towards the front, meeting no resistance, and went into bivouac near St. Germain on the afternoon of 5 Aug 44.

37

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After Action Report for Month of Aug 44 Cont'd

During the late evening and night of 5 Aug 44 one section of reconnaissance while reconnoitering enemy positions was ambushed by a hostile out-post consisting of Eight (8) men. The section withdrew killing seven (7) of the enemy. This was the first action of any part of the Battalion and one of the first in the Division.

On 5 Aug 44 Combat Command "B", of which this unit was a part, was divided into two separate Task Forces. One Task Force was to be known as "TFA" (Task Force Anderson) and was composed of the 81st Tank Battalion less Companies "A" and "D", plus companies "B" and "C" of the 15th Armored Inf Bn. E/15 was in Command of Capt Arthur J. Elmore, Inf., 050138 and C/15 was in Command of Capt Armand W. Gardner, Inf., 0452315. A/81 was attached to the other Task Force and D/81 was placed under Combat Command "B" control. The tank and Infantry companies were "married" so that each tank crew had an Infantry squad that habitually worked with it and mutually supported each other. The 105 Howitzer gun from each medium tank company was attached to the Assault Gun Platoon of Headquarters Company to form a six gun battery.

On 6 Aug "TFA" moved to the vicinity of Meslay du Maine, enroute to LeMans, went into bivouac for the night and set up road-blocks at critical points. The enemy attempted to run these blocks and as a result had the following equipment destroyed; four light sedans, four Mark IV tanks and one 37mm AT gun. Two small vehicles and eleven Germans were captured and many more were killed. The next morning the march towards LeMans was resumed. Heavy sniper fire was encountered in Maigne so the town was reduced to ashes. The force reached the city of LeMans on the evening of 8 Aug and aided in its liberation. The primary mission here was the establishment of blocks on the avenues of escape to trap any enemy attempting to leave the city. The Mortars fired into the city in support of Co "C" which moved part way into the city and captured about 200 of the enemy.

After this first series of operations which concluded with the liberation of LeMans, the Task Force drove to the North towards Sees, assisting in the pincers movement which resulted in the now famous Argentan-Falaise Gap. Enroute to Sees, which was reached 12 Aug 44, considerable resistance was encountered and the route of advance was left littered with enemy dead and destroyed material and few prisoners were taken. In the vicinity of Sees, the area was out-posted and the unit spent three days performing light maintenance in preparation for the next operation. On 15 Aug 44 "TFA" began a move to the East towards a new objective, the Seine River. After marching East about 100 miles the column turned North towards Gaillon and the Seine. During this operation only light resistance was met until 22 Aug 44 between Vernon and Gaillon. The Task Force was given the mission of flushing the enemy from the wooded area near La Chapelle. The mission was accomplished, killing about 20 enemy. At this time the force was attacked by eight German planes (ME-109). One was shot down and the rest were driven off. The column then moved a few hundred yards and was fired upon by a dug-in camouflaged tank on the right flank after one married company (Co "B") passed the position. The column halted, went into a defensive position and noticed a few enemy infantrymen moving about among grain shocks. Air and artillery support were called for and the artillery, supported by the Assault guns, caused two enemy tanks to move into the open. By that time the air support arrived and destroyed the tanks. Married "C" Co assaulted infantry positions among the grain shocks while Co "B" protected the left flank. The Co "C" tanks, with their enormous fire power, fired

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After Action Report for Month of Aug 44 Cont'd

on all grain shocks and likely positions while the infantry followed the tanks to mop-up remaining enemy. One Mark V Tank was set on fire by .30 Cal tracer fired into a gas can on the outside of the tank. Upon close examination of the area it was found that the enemy had consisted of about 200 SS infantryman in fox-holes covered with grain shocks. All enemy were killed - no prisoners were taken. Our losses consisted of four medium and one light tank destroyed and one light tank damaged by the enemy tanks. Enemy infantryman killed five men and wounded several. After completing the mission in this area on 24 Aug 44 the Task Force moved South and East to the vicinity of Senneville (6 Mi South of Mantes) and spent several days on intensive maintenance. Co "B" received all new Ford Tanks, the other companies received several new engines.

On 30 Aug 44 the Task Force marched through Paris and North to the vicinity of Pont St Mexence. Scattered resistance was encountered North of Paris and the bridge across the Oise River had been destroyed by the enemy, thereby slowing the action.

SUMMARY

During the entire month of August the Task Force operated on a mission of pursuit and exploitation. The mission being carried out to the limit of endurance of men and vehicles, driving the enemy ahead to be trapped or cutting off and reducing enemy positions.

During this operation speed was of utmost importance thereby making reconnaissance of terrain, routes and enemy positions virtually impossible. The very speed which made reconnaissance extremely difficult also confused the enemy to such an extent that properly organized resistance was, for him, impossible.

The enemy must be well defeated and confused if the pursuit and exploitation mission, such as this operation has been, is to be a success.

During most of this operation, the situation and orders required both day and night operation. Night operation proved to be very costly when any resistance was met and should be avoided whenever possible.

Operations of tank and infantry units were closely coordinated. The tank and infantry companies, platoons, sections, and individual vehicle crews were married almost permanently, being separated but rarely, for specific missions.

The Task Force operated often on secondary roads, thus avoiding prepared delaying and defensive positions.

The Mortar Platoon and the 105 Howitzer Battery, both attached to Hq Co were used to advantage during the drive.

The Air Force furnished splendid direct and indirect support to "TFA". The indirect support often resulted in our meeting a confused and disorganized enemy. On 22 Aug 44 "TFA" was supported directly in the vicinity of Les Epiniers. The aircraft neutralized emplaced enemy tanks which had destroyed four of our tanks during the afternoon. Artillery support was received both from Division and Corps and a Liaison officer and forward observer were habitually attached to us from the 71st A.F.A. Bn. Although not an integral part of TFA, Engineers were habitually

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After Action Report for Month of Aug Cont'd

attached. During the period covered they laid a mine field in the vicinity of LeMans and cleared the route of advance of disabled enemy vehicles. Engineer personnel in Dump Trucks are very vulnerable to hostile small arms fire. A substitution of armored personnel carriers for the dump trucks would permit the Engineers to be attached to the support echelon thereby making them more readily available.

Radio communication using SCR 506 and 508 was excellent. The well trained operators and skilled conscientious maintenance personnel contributed much to the dependancy of signal communication. Some times in a static situation wire for telephonic communication was used. A liaison officer was used to complement radio communication.

Personnel replacements received, while for the most part potentially good soldiers, lacked the necessary training. A large number of them had spent so much time in the replacement system that most of the confidence which they had as a result of basic training was lost through long periods of mental and physical inactivity. It was the rule, rather than the exception, to find men assigned an MOS which would indicate a specialist, while actually the man would be an unskilled tank basic.

All tank commanders should be armed with a cal .45 pistol with shoulder holster. The sub-machine gun M-3 is an effective weapon but difficult to bring into action quickly and effectively from the tank turret.

Equipment is generally adequate but we lack a gun to cope with the heavier German tanks. A higher caliber gun with a very high velocity and smokeless propellant charge could be very favorably employed.

The operations during this month required large quantities of petrol. In some instances, the supply lines extended over 80 miles. In order to overcome the problem of an over-extended supply line, TFA carried a rolling F & L dump, consisting of five reserve trucks, in its trains. Furthermore, a QM trucking platoon, whose function was restricted primarily to carrying F & L, was attached to CC"B" who directed that these trucks be made available to TFA when the situation warranted, refueling on the march.

It was discovered that during an engagement, the men consumed less than the normal ration. The Ten-in-One ration proved to be most satisfactory and suitable. In the Ten-in-One ration, the #4 menu was found most desirable and was least available, if at all.

Ammunition presented no aggravated problems in-as-much as the amount carried in the basic load was sufficient to meet all the needs of the Task Force. However, the demand for incendiary grenades exceeded the supply at all times.

In general, considering the distance involved, the heavy equipment stood the test of endurance very well. The Ford V-8 engine was found to be superior to the Continental radial engine. Chevron type tracks proved to be more effective than block type tracks on the M-4 tank. The Medical Detachment usually exhausted their water supply required in the treatment of the wounded. A 250 gallon water trailer is needed to overcome this problem.

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After Action Report for Month of Aug 44 Cont'd

The collection and evacuation of PW's presented a serious problem. Disposition of PW's in fast moving situations presented a problem for assault echelons, for frequently platoons accumulated PW's for whom they had no transportation for evacuating such to the rear.

Frequently, the supply trains of the Task Force were subjected to harassing enemy action, mostly small arms fire, which necessitated the assignment of a light tank section for their protection.

Success of any operation is dependent, to a great extent, upon the aggressive leadership of officers and non-commissioned officers, and the speed with which success is realized varies in direct proportion to the initiative and ingenuity shown by non-commissioned officers and junior officers.

During the first month of combat the value of our long and intensive training was many times demonstrated. Tactics and techniques developed and practiced in maneuvers proved to be basically sound. At the end of this period the unit was confident of its ability as a fighting force.

LEROY H. ANDERSON,
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding.

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S-3 Journal

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HEADQUARTERS 81ST TANK BATTALION

APO No 255

U. S. Army

SUBJECT : After Action Report for Month of September 1944

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.
(Thru Channels)

In compliance with Par 10 (C3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted.

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Commanding Officers:

Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Commander
Capt Ralph R. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co
Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010603, Co "B", evacuated
1500, 19 Sept 44.
1st Lt John G. Jonasch, Cav., 01010823, Co "B", assumed
command 1500, 19 Sept 44.
1st Lt Robert M. McNab, Inf., 01013050, Co "B", assumed
command 0900, 20 Sept 44.
Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co "C"
Capt Harold M. Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co "D"
Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
Capt Arthur Stern, MC, 01690488, Med Det.

Losses in action this month were considerably higher than in August; One (1) officer and Thirty-Six (36) EM killed in action; Three (3) officers and Eighty (80) EM wounded in action and evacuated; no personnel were reported missing in action nor captured. Replacements consisting of One (1) officer and Sixty-Four (64) EM were received during the month.

The enemy encountered during the first half of the month, prior to the entry into Germany, consisted largely of small units which were disorganized, confused, poorly equipped and, with the exception of the few SS troops, offered little resistance. The enemy action was largely a rear guard delaying action. Being forced to withdraw so rapidly, they had very little time to prepare adequate defenses. Except for destroying bridges, very little advantage was taken of natural obstacles. A small amount of enemy armor was encountered during this period. Most of the armor seemed to be more interested in withdrawing than fighting. About the middle of this month the Task Force entered Germany for the first time. The troops encountered in this sector of the Siegfried Line were of a very low caliber, poorly equipped but were apparently very capably led. These troops were generally in very poor physical condition, many of them having been recently discharged from the hospital at Trier, however due to their large numbers and the quality of their leadership they constituted a formidable force. Some mines were used by the enemy during this period to block roads. During the time the Task Force was in Germany a large amount of enemy artillery was encountered. On a number of occasions it was noticed that when hostile artillery had registered on a area and it was expected that they would fire for effect,

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After Action Report for month of Sept 44 Cont'd

they ceased firing. During this period the enemy made some use of their armor, usually firing from concealed positions and immediately moving to a new position or into hiding. No air activity was observed during Sept. About 500 enemy were captured and about 950 killed during the month of September.

During the first few days of the month TFA continued on the same mission as in August - pursuit and exploitation. During the balance of the month the unit engaged in out-posting the Luxembourg-Germany border and in a mission to test the strength and fortifications of the Siegfried line and to draw in the enemy forces so as to relieve the pressure in other sectors of the line.

1 Sept 44 found the Task Force on the road heading North for the Belgian border near Conde, France. Head of the column was halted near Remy by heavy machine gun fire at 2030. It was extremely dark and neither terrain nor enemy dispositions could be determined. However the Task Force was ordered to advance regardless of opposition. The advance guard deployed and attempted to move forward but flares and a burning ammunition pile illuminated them so that two half tracks were taken under fire and destroyed by AT guns. The enemy also had snipers and bazookas in this position. In accordance with orders, attempts were made throughout the night to make a way thru or around the position but reconnaissance patrols became lost and could not operate in the darkness so that the whole nights labor was to no avail. Just before dawn the enemy withdrew and we were enabled to proceed.

Orders to continue the attack in the dark cost the leading company 2 half tracks destroyed and one damaged, 11 enlisted men killed, eight enlisted men wounded and both officers of the advance guard wounded.

No progress was made and only one German was killed. It is believed that exorbitant toll will always be paid for any such attempt to advance in the dark over unknown terrain against an unknown enemy position.

The destination was reached on 3 Sept 44. After reaching Conde the surrounding areas were cleared, capturing about 250 of the enemy, Sixty-Nine (69) Two horse teams, wagons and saddle horses. The enemy put up light resistance.

Leaving Conde 4 Sept 44, the unit marched South thru France turning East at Douzy, across Belgium to Kopstal, Luxembourg, arriving there on 10 Sept 44. In Luxembourg light road blocks consisting of felled trees, which were not covered by fire or mined, were encountered. These were pushed aside and the column continued to an assembly area North of Diekirch, Luxembourg. Enroute resistance consisting of a 20mm Flak gun and Two (2) high velocity 75mm AT gun was encountered. These were destroyed and the Rcn platoon took Four (4) prisoners.

In the area North of Diekirch the Task Force put on a show of strength along the German border and reconnaissance patrols entered Germany on 11 Sept 44, in the vicinity of Stalzenberg. They were the first American soldiers to enter Germany. Enemy troops were observed from the high ground overlooking the Siegfried line and our troops harassed them in the vicinity of Obereisenbach until 16 Sept 44 when the unit entered Germany in force. Entering at Wallendorf and going as far as Hommerdingen, well inside the fortifications of the Siegfried line.

During the first few days in Germany the gap in the Siegfried line was widened. The enemy was routed out of their fortified positions, initially encountering half hearted resistance which increased until we found the enemy determined and willing to fight and fight hard. The Tank-Infantry teams destroyed many pill-boxes and bunkers. That part of the Battalion that remained in the bivouac area received artillery fire almost continuously. Calibers ranged from 8cm to 15cm. Enemy fire from the North, East, and South came from concealed positions. Several

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After Action Report for Month of Sept 44 Cont'd

high-velocity cannons fired into the area using direct fire. Several artillery missions were called for as counter-battery fire. Our assault guns and Mortars supported the Assault on the pillboxes. The attached tank-destroyers fired directly into hostile positions in Neidersgegen and Ammeldingen. An enemy artillery battery was silenced. Prisoners of War stated that a good many of the enemy would surrender if we would assure them that they would not be killed. A public address system was requested from Higher Headquarters but arrived too late. PW's attempted to surrender to our forces several times and were fired upon by other members of their own forces. On 19 September the Task Force, in conjunction with Task Force Gilson covered the withdrawal of CC"R" and all artillery across the Gay and Our rivers into Luxembourg. On 20 September the Battalion covered the withdrawal of TFG across the border, remaining with Combat Command Headquarters, the only elements of the division on German soil. By the evening of 20 Sept the Task Force had lost six tanks and three half tracks, and had suffered heavy casualties. That evening the whole force was pulled in and organized into a tight defensive position on top of hill 375 between Niedersgegen and Ammeldingen. This included prepared mortar and artillery concentrations with all tanks and TD's, supported by every available soldier including infantryman, engineers and clerks dug in in a cordon around the perimeter in anticipation of a night attack or attempted infiltration by the numerous German forces which had pressed close to our position.

No attack came during the night but at daybreak 21 September, in a heavy fog, with visibility only a few yards, an infantry attack came from the South and East against the sector held by Headquarters Company and "B" Company. Protective fires were laid down, and because the perimeter was tightly organized our soldiers remained in their foxholes and shot anyone who came into sight thru the fog. No penetration of our lines was made and the attack was beaten off with an estimated 40 Germans killed. 1 PW was taken. Artillery and Mortar fire was received most of the day from NE, E, and S. Duds were identified as 105mm, 120mm (mortar) 150mm. Some rockets were fired into the area by the enemy and high velocity weapon fired in our direction from the South. Enemy infiltrated into woods adjacent to the area and had to be cleared out several times. During the afternoon a very large caliber weapon (possibly a railway gun) fired in our direction but the rounds landed a thousand yards to the North. One round was observed to make a direct hit on an enemy infantry position. PW stated that we might expect an attack at any time and from any direction. Friendly aircraft bombed and strafed hostile positions and silenced many of the enemy artillery guns. Air reported destroying four railway guns and several artillery batteries. The Tank-Infantry teams continued to reduce enemy fortifications and clear the nearby woods of enemy infantry. The job of clearing the woods was continuous as the enemy always infiltrated back. Throughout the 21st the Task Force concentrated on protecting itself in the face of a heavy and continuous artillery attack and continuous infantry pressure. Several small infantry attacks were repulsed, including enemy infantry infiltration with bazookas. Enemy kept pressing in all day although he sustained very heavy casualties. Fifteen enemy tanks at Neidersgegen, which were preparing to assault our position, were either destroyed or immobilized by friendly air activity. It was estimated that two regiments of hostile artillery were in the vicinity, part of which was self-propelled. It is also estimated that a major portion of the 19th GAF Division was in Beisdorf and elements of several other divisions were in the immediate vicinity.

The overextension of our defenses was aggravated by heavy casualties and it was impossible to hold any outpost line. Outposts and road blocks were frequently isolated. Patrols of tanks and infantry a few hundred yards from the main position were used to clear out infiltrating German detachments. Shortly before dark such a patrol cleared the corridor from hill 375 to the ford at Wallendorf. This patrol reported killing about fifty German infantryman at least half of whom were armed with bazookas. The action of this patrol undoubtedly contributed to the

After Action Report for Month of Sept 44 Cont'd

successful withdrawal that night. About dark an aid man looking for our wounded stumbled into a German CP in a concealed pillbox under hill 375 which we occupied. This Headquarters detachment commanded by a Captain and including several lieutenants, was within three minutes walk of the Task Force CP but it was too dark to organize a party to reduce it.

Orders for the withdrawal from Germany were issued at 2100, 21 Sept and the Task Force withdrew during the night and early morning, encountering light small arms fire, interdicting artillery fire and direct fire from a high velocity weapon in the vicinity of Wallendorf. By daylight on the 22nd the unit was in bivouac in the vicinity of Stegen, Luxembourg and remained there for three days. On 25 Sept orders were received to move to the vicinity of Gilsdorf, Luxembourg to out-post the Luxembourg-German border over an extended area. This mission was continued until the end of the month.

SUMMARY

The operations during the first part of the month closely paralleled those of August; pursuing and exploiting. The latter part of the month TFA put on a demonstration of strength along the German border and entered Germany on a mission to test the strength of the Siegfried Line and to draw enemy forces away from other sectors in order to assist other operations.

When operating against pillboxes it is necessary to completely demolish them in order to prevent the enemy from infiltrating back and remaining there.

Armor should keep moving. When forced to assume defensive or holding positions enemy artillery, mortar and AT weapons can be brought to bear and casualties mount disproportionately. This can be partially offset by local tank counterattacks but the enemy concentrates mines and AT fires about the occupied position, making such counterattacks very costly to us. In the last three days on German soil in the vicinity of Wallendorf, the Task Force suffered more casualties than in the entire campaign across France, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Good infantry support is necessary to hold ground and keep supply lines open.

Armor is very sensitive to weather conditions. Poor weather with the resultant mud can hamper tank operations and an extended period of bad weather can make the use of armor nearly impossible, as well as basically unsound.

Operation of tanks and infantry units must be closely coordinated, as almost every hostile group is equipped with hand AT weapons. In order to neutralize these weapons, tank and Infantry should be married or inter-mingled down to the smallest unit almost permanently, being separated only for specialized operations and then only for short periods of time.

Attaching the Assault guns from the companies to the Assault gun platoon in Headquarters company to make up a six gun firing battery was found to be a most effective way of using these weapons. This nucleus of operation has been found to increase the fire power of the support echelon. Having a 105 Howitzer battery as an integral part of the Task Force has proved invaluable on several occasions.

Telephonic communication in static situations, particularly between outposts and CP's, proved to be a valuable contribution to our defense plan and was used to supplement normal radio communication (SCR 506 and 508).

The air supported our operation in Germany very closely and the effectiveness of aircraft in neutralizing enemy formations and in helping to maintain the morale of ground troops cannot be over-stressed. Other supporting units, ie, Tank Destroyers and Engineers were under the control of CC'B and were used to advantage several times.

Supply functioned well even though TFA was cut off for more than 60 hours and at times it was necessary to use armored personnel carriers for supply transport.

After Action Report for Month of Sept 44 Cont'd

Equipment is generally adequate, but we lack a gun to cope with the heavier German tanks. A higher caliber gun with a very high velocity and smokeless propellant charge could be very favorably employed.

Success of any operation is dependent to a great extent upon the aggressive leadership of officers and Non-Commissioned officers, and the speed with which success is realized varies in direct proportion to the initiative and ingenuity shown by Non-Commissioned officers and junior officers.

The Battalion entered this period well trained and battle-tested. New situations were met with enthusiasm and it was proven that even in an adverse situation the Battalion could overcome fanatical resistance. The unit is now a well disciplined, experienced and confident fighting force.

LEROY H. ANDERSON,
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding.

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* Auth: Itr Hq 5th AD *
* 19 Oct 44 *
* Initials: *
* Date: 9 Nov 44 *

HEADQUARTERS 81st TANK BATTALION
APO No 255
U.S. Army

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of October 1944

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

In compliance with Par 10 (C3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted.

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Commanding Officers:

- Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Commander
- Capt Ralph R Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co/81st
- 1st Lt Robert M. McNab, Inf., 01013050, Co B/81st
- Capt Arthur J. Elmore, Inf., 050138, Co B/15th
- Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co C/81st
- Capt Armand W. Gardner, Inf., 0452315, Co C/15th
- Capt Harold M Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co D/81st
- Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co/81st
- Capt Arthur Stern, MC, 01690488, Med Det/81st

Losses in action None.

The only action during October 1944 consisted of outpostting a sector of the Germany-Luxembourg Border northwest of Wallendorf, Germany. No actual contact was made with the enemy. On 2 October 1944 the Task Force was relieved by an Infantry Battalion.

There was no further action during the month of October 1944.

LeRoy H. Anderson
LEROY H. ANDERSON
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding

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S-3 Journal

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* SECRET *
* Auth: Ltr Hq 5th Armd *
* Div 19 Oct 44 *
* Initials: *WES* *
* Date: 6 Dec 44 *

HEADQUARTERS 81ST TANK BATTALION
A.P.O. #255
U.S. Army

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of November 1944.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

In compliance with Par 10 (C3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted.

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Commanding Officers:

- Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Comdr
- Capt Ralph R. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co
- Capt Robert M. McNab, Inf., 01013050, Co "A"
- Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010603, Co "B"
- Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co "C"
- Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
- Capt Marion B. Hook, MC, 0418969, Med Det
- Capt Harold M. Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co "D"

Losses in action None.

During the period 1 Nov to 10 Nov 1944 this Battalion was not in direct contact with the enemy but was in support of the Infantry and Field Artillery.

The Mortar Platoon was attached to the Mortar Platoon of the 15th Armd Inf Bn to form a six gun battery. This battery remained in position near the front lines at Hoffen, Germany and fired an average of five or six missions daily. As mortar ammunition was not readily available, only targets of sufficient importance were taken under fire.

The Assault Gun Platoon was under the control of and fired in support of the 95th F.A. Bn. Most of the firing was interdiction firing of about fifty (50) rounds daily. Some of the firing was "time on target".

One platoon of medium tanks were in direct support of the 15th Armd Inf Bn at Hoffen, Germany. This platoon did no firing; but were instrumental in helping to locate enemy artillery by sound and flash. These tanks were left in position; but the crews were changed every two days.

One medium tank company was under the control of and fired in support of the 400th F.A. Bn. About four hundred (400) rounds per day were fired, most of which was interdiction firing. The last few days in this position the tank-dozers from each company and an Engineer bull-dozer were used to dig the tanks in on the firing line to protect them from enemy artillery and to get the maximum elevation. The tank companies were rotated every two days to give each company maximum experience in firing. Very light counter-battery fire was received.

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After Action Report for the Month of November 1944 (cont)

The light tank company, supported by the I and R Platoon, was given the mission of guarding three (3) bridges and a hydro-electric plant, and preventing enemy infiltration. No enemy activity was encountered; but some enemy artillery landed in the area.

On 11 Nov 1944 the unit moved from this area and had no further contact with the enemy during the month.

Radio silence was maintained throughout the month.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. When supporting the Field Artillery with indirect fire each medium tank company should have a minimum of eight (8) field telephones instead of the five (5) now authorized.

2. The medium tank companies could well be used to a greater extent in the role of supporting artillery during somewhat static situations.

3. The absence of field telephones in the TE of the Assault Gun Platoon and Mortar Platoon seriously hampers the operation of these platoons.

4. The tank-dozer is a valuable piece of equipment for digging emplacements; but cannot be used enough to warrant having more than one (1) per medium tank company. The tank with dozer should be in addition to tanks of the line as the dozer seriously affects the operation of the tank in combat.

Leroy H. Anderson
LEROY H. ANDERSON
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding

2 Incls:
Incl 1-S-3 Record of events
Incl 2-Overlay

-2-

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SECRET
Auth: CG 5th Armd Div
Initials: *led*
Date: 9 Nov 44

HEADQUARTERS 5TH ARMORED DIVISION
APO No 255
U. S. Army

319.1 GNNJG

9 November 1944.

SUBJECT: Action Against The Enemy, Reports After.

TO : The Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, D. C.

THRU : Commanding General, V Corps, APO 305, U. S. Army.

*OPD
etc.*

Transmitted herewith Action Against the Enemy Report for 81st Tank
Battalion, 5th Armored Division for the month of October 1944.

For the Commanding General:

C. C. Devault
C. C. DEVAULT,
Lt. Col., A. G. D.,
Adjutant General.

1 Incl.
Report for Oct 44.



FEB 1. 1945

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**HEADQUARTERS 81ST TANK BATTALION
A.P.O. #255
U.S. Army**

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of December 1944

**TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.
(Thru Channels)**

In compliance with Par 10 (C3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted:

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Commanding Officers:

Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Comdr
Capt Ralph R. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co
Capt Robert McNab, Inf., 01013050, Co "A" (evacuated
14 Dec 44 at 1700)
Capt Donald Hearl, Cav., 0315739, Co "A" (assumed
command 14 Dec 44 at 1700)
Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010603, Co "B"
Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co "C"
Capt Harold M. Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co "D"
Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
Capt Marion B. Hook, MC, 0418969, Med Det

Losses in action were rather heavy. Two (2) Officers and three (3) enlisted men were killed in action, and three (3) Officers and twenty-five (25) enlisted men were wounded and evacuated. One (1) Officer and one (1) enlisted man became combat exhausted and were evacuated.

The enemy forces encountered in the thirteen days of action (10 Dec to 23 Dec 44 incl) consisted mostly of small forces of well dug-in infantrymen. Several high velocity AT weapons were encountered; and there was constant heavy artillery and mortar fire. Enemy forces held high ground across the Roer River, southeast of our objectives. From this vantage point they had excellent observation which resulted in accurate artillery and mortar fire. It was difficult to locate these gun positions.

Enemy aircraft were active over the area intermittently during the entire operation, but had no marked affect.

Co "D" was attached to CC"B" Hq for security, supply, and evacuation.

During the assault, platoons of medium tanks from the line companies were attached to and supported companies of the 15th AIB and the 2nd Bn of the 330th Inf Regt, 83rd Div. However it was not a married formation.

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After Action Report For Dec 1944 (cont.)

The Mortar Platoon was attached to the 15th AIB. These three guns, plus the three guns from Hq Co 15th AIB, formed a six-gun battery which proved very effective.

The Assault Platoon was not committed as there was an abundance of artillery, from other units, supporting the attack.

Line companies rotated platoons about every other day during the operation to give relief to the personnel on front lineduty, and to give them an opportunity to service guns and vehicles.

During the operation 13 Dec, the 15th AIB, supported by our medium tanks, attacked on the right flank and abreast the 2nd Bn of the 330th Inf Regt who was operating on the right sector of CC"A".

On the morning of 13 Dec two platoons of tanks, Co C/81, moved up to join the 2nd Bn of the 330th Inf Regt at Strass. At Schafberg, enroute to Strass, one platoon of tanks, Co C/81, encountered direct fire from high velocity guns. Three tanks were hit and burned and the turret of another was jammed by an enemy shell. Tanks were unable to deploy from the road as the area was very heavily mined. About noon the operation was discontinued and another assault was made the following day.

Capt Robert McNab, C.O. Co "A", was wounded and evacuated 14 Dec. Capt Donald Hearl, S-3 81st Tank Bn, assumed command of Co "A" at 1700 14 Dec 1944.

On 14 Dec Maj Francis McNamara returned to duty and resumed duties as Battalion S-3 Operations.

During the morning of 15 Dec the first objective--the woods west of Bergheim, Germany was taken by the 15th AIB supported by tanks from the 81st Tank Bn. At this objective six enemy 75mm AT weapons and two 88mm AT weapons were found unmanned. Two of these guns had been destroyed, one by Co B/81 and one by Co C/81, the previous day. The enemy had excellently dug-in positions at this place; but had evidently evacuated the area. During this operation three of our tanks were knocked-out by enemy mines. The second objective--the town of Bergheim, was taken during the late afternoon of the same day by the 2nd Bn of the 330th Inf Regt supported by tanks from the 81st Tank Bn. The following morning the final objective--high ground southeast of Bergheim overlooking the Roer River, was taken by the 85th Rcn Sq Mech supported by tanks from Co's B and C/81.

The period from 17 Dec to 21 Dec consisted chiefly of outpost-ing and securing the ground already gained. Enemy patrols were quite active against these positions just before daybreak; but all patrols were driven off.

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Evacuation of vehicles, which were disabled, was found to be too costly in personnel as the enemy had each vehicle marked as a concentration; and noise made at these positions always brought down heavy fire.

On 22 Dec the 2nd Bn, 330th Inf Regt, supported by tanks from Co B/81, was given the mission of clearing enemy from Undermaubach. The town was entered about 0830. The German garrison retired to the houses and basements and their artillery and mortars started to shell the town. This fire continued throughout the operation so that our infantry was forced to utilize the security of buildings; excepting when actually mopping-up or handling prisoners. About 35 percent more than the basic load of 75mm ammunition was carried and expended. As each house was reduced by direct short range fire of AP, HE, and WP the surviving occupants generally surrendered under a white flag. One hundred seventy two (172) enemy were taken prisoner during the day; and about the same number were killed. The platoon leader's tank was struck by a bazooka round but was still able to operate. The town was in our hands by 1600 the same day.

All personnel from the 81st Tank Bn was relieved and recalled to the Battalion assembly area on 23 Dec. No further contact was made with the enemy during the month.

CONCLUSIONS

Approaches to the line of departure for an assault, and the line of departure itself, must not be assumed to be free of enemy resistance unless such terrain is actually held by friendly troops.

Enemy minefields must always be assumed to be present, on terrain in which tanks are operating when in hostile country, until paths for tanks have actually been cleared of mines.

Better communication is necessary between the tank platoon leader and the infantry platoon leader.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be a provision in the TE of the Assault Gun and mortar platoons for wire communication. In static situations or situations where mobility is not a leading factor we have found that radio is not very satisfactory. The radio SCR 509 is too bulky and heavy to be carried to an OP. A telephone is the only satisfactory solution.

At least a platoon of Engineers should always be with a tank battalion when it is in contact with the enemy, for the purpose of clearing mines; and additional Engineers should be available on call.

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After Action Report For Dec 1944 (cont)

A tank with rotary mine-exploder attachment should be permanently a part of the tank battalion, and other vehicles of this type should be available on call.

It is recommended that the platoon leader's tank have a phone located on its rear and wired into the interphone of the tank so that the infantry platoon leader can talk with the tank platoon leader. This has been tried and proved successful; but due to the lack of equipment this system cannot be put into practice.

Better communication between tanks and the dismounted infantry, with which they are working, is essential. A possible solution to this problem is to provide the tank platoon leader with an SCR 536 "Handy-talkie" radio.

Leroy H. Anderson
LEROY H. ANDERSON
Lt. Col., Inf.
Commanding

4 Incls:
S-3 Record of Events
S-3 Journal
S-2 Journal
Overlays

-4- ~~SECRET~~

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HEADQUARTERS 81ST TANK BATTALION
A.P.O. #255
U.S. Army

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of January 1945

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.
(Thru Channels).

In compliance with Par 10 (C3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted:

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Commanding Officers:

Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Comdr
Capt Ralph R. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co
Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010603, Co B/81
1st Lt Warren A. Hedlin, Inf., 0441290, Co B/15 AIB
Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co C/81
1st Lt Robert H. Hoffman, Inf., 0131445, Co C/15 AIB
(Commanded this company until 3 Jan 45)
Capt Jack Rice, Inf., 0413169, Co C/15 AIB
(Assumed Command of this company 3 Jan 45)
Capt Harold M. Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co D
Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
Capt Marion B. Hook, MC, 0418969, Med Det

605
[Redacted]

Losses in action None.

This Unit was not in contact with the enemy at any time during the month of January 1945.

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:
RESTRICTED
BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
Donald Cameron
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 11/10/45 1945.

LeRoy H. Anderson
LEROY H. ANDERSON
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding

1-Incl:
S-3 Record of Events

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

five hundred (500) prisoners were taken. Only a few of these prisoners were processed by our S-2 for intelligence purposes, the balance being turned over to the 102nd Inf Div.

During this action enemy information was very good and defense overprints showing the latest fortifications and aerial photos, of part of the area we were to work in, were available. Reconnaissance elements were on our exposed flank and kept us informed rather well. The civilian population didn't present any problem as they moved to the rear across fields, leaving the roads clear. In no case did they prove hostile.

On the evening of 25 February 1945 Task Force Anderson (T.F.A.) crossed the Roer River in the vicinity of Linnich, Germany and proceeded to an assembly position North of Pottorf, Germany.

Orders were received at 0430 hours 26 Feb 45 for an attack on four objectives to the North and East of Erkelenz in conjunction with an attack on Kuckhoven and Erkelenz by the 102nd Inf Div.

F.O. #20, Hq QC"B", 5th AD, 26 Feb 45, (copy attached) ordered T.F.A. to attack on order and block all traffic North and North East of Erkelenz. One platoon B/22 Engineers was attached as of 0800 for the operation. The towns of Hauthausen, Wockerath, Terheeg, and Mennekrath were given as objectives where the traffic was to be cut.

The Battalion Commander assembled his company commanders and issued his orders at 0800. His plan was to break down his two married companies into four Task Forces, each under a Company Commander and assign to each an objective. The composition of each Force was left to the discretion of the two Commanding Officers of each pair of married companies, with the provision that a married platoon be prepared to support each assault. This platoon was either to be set up initially or to be constituted from the first attacking force after attaining their objective. The following is the breakdown and assigned objectives of each Task Force:

Task Force Wilson--2nd and 3rd platoons "B" Companies married; objective--Mennekrath (#3); Task Force Hedlin--1st platoons "B" Companies married plus the AT platoon; objective--Hauthausen (#4); Task Force Guthrie--2nd platoons "C" Companies married; objective--Wockerath (#1); Task Force Rice--3rd platoons "C" Companies married; objective--Terheeg (#2); the 1st platoon "C" Companies married plus the "C" Company AT platoon in company reserve available upon call to either "C" Company Task Force.

The plan was for Task Force Wilson to cross, on order, a line of departure (Hauthausen Road) which had been secured by the 406th Inf Regt and initially seize the Villages of Wey, Hof Roitz and to keep under fire the Village of Berverath while Task Forces Guthrie and Hedlin assaulted their objectives simultaneously. Task Force Rice was to assault its objective upon occupation of #1. Task Force Wilson was to be relieved of its initial objectives by a platoon

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

oon of TD's from Company "B", 628th TD Bn and then, on order, attack its objective. The Battalion plan for launching of successive attacks was to so order them as to always have one Task Force available as Battalion reserve.

The terrain was very flat and, in good weather, excellent tank ground. It had rained for the two previous days and was raining the day of the attack. The fields over which the forces had to move were mostly cultivated which made movement difficult, especially for half-tracks and wheeled vehicles.

At 1100 hours orders were received to cross the LD at 1200. Task Force Wilson moved from the assembly position (022-692) and crossed the LD at 1205. In moving up to the LD the half tracks became bogged so the infantry were mounted on the tanks. A mine field on both sides of the LD was encountered through which they negotiated without loss. A smoke screen was laid on the town of Holzweiler which was effective to the extent that it covered the crossing of the LD though just as the leading wave reached Wey an anti-tank gun, from the vicinity of Holzweiler, knocked out the last tank of the lead platoon, the Assault Gun's Forward Observer's tank, and the first tank of the following wave. An enemy tank and several anti-tank guns were observed and fired upon. Results were not verified as after action inspection was not made, though fire was received from the same vicinity later. The two villages of Wey and Hof Roitz were secured and Berverath was brought under fire by 1230.

Task Forces Guthrie and Hedlin crossed the LD at 1215, Guthrie on the left, Hedlin on the right; both on the West of Wilson. One tank, one half track, and one medical 1/4 ton truck were lost near the LD due to mine action in the mine field which Task Force Wilson had passed through. AT fire from the right flank was heavy, but not too accurate. Task Force Guthrie occupied objective at 1330. Task Force Hedlin had one tank disabled by AT fire from the right flank. He secured the objective by 1400 and reorganized his force. An infantry counter attack of platoon size came from the vicinity of Venrath, but was repulsed after the enemy scouts had been captured. During the night two hostile tanks attempted to enter the village (objective #4). One was disabled by bazooka fire and the other withdrew.

Task Force Rice crossed the LD in rear of Guthrie and secured objective #2 at 1430. The half tracks of the reserve AT Platoon bogged down in mud near the LD and were knocked out by AT fire from the right. Task Force Rice lost one half track to AT fire on his approach. Task Force Guthrie was relieved at objective at 1500 by a Battalion from the 406th Inf Regt. He proceeded with his force to #2 where the married companies were reorganized.

Task Force Wilson was relieved at 1330 by a platoon of TD's from Company "B", 628th TD Bn at Wey and Hof Roitz and was ordered to attack #3 at 1345. He moved out without trouble and just East of #2 called for Engineers, which were in reserve at the Battalion CP, to help clear passage over the railroad into Mennekrath. Before Engineers arrived Task Force Wilson moved on #3 and secured it at

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

1500. One tank was lost by AT fire from the North East. All objectives were taken and secured and linked-up with the 406th Inf Regt, on our left, North of Erkelenz by 1630. One platoon of TD's B/628 went into #4 to reinforce Task Force Hedlin.

The Battalion CP was moved from the assembly position to a position in the vicinity of the Assault Gun Platoon where it remained throughout the operation.

The evacuation of wounded became a serious problem due to the fact that the terrain was practically impassable for wheeled vehicles. The problem was solved by securing a section of light tanks from CC"B" for evacuation of wounded.

The enemy losses for this one day were about forty (40) killed, two hundred fifty (250) prisoners, two (2) 75mm AT guns destroyed, and one (1) Mark IV tank destroyed.

The losses in this Task Force were: three (3) tanks destroyed, two (2) disabled (later recovered), four (4) half tracks destroyed, four (4) half tracks disabled (later recovered), and one (1) 1/4 ton medical jeep destroyed.

During the night of 26 Feb the Battalion Commander was called to Hq CC"B" and there received orders for the next day's action. Field Order #21, Hq CC"B", 5th AD, 26 Feb 45 with attached overlay was received at 0010 27 Feb 45 (copies attached).

The Company Task Forces were to be relieved (from the objectives attained the previous day) by the 406th Inf Regt as soon as possible. At 0700 CC"B" was to cross a LD running East to West on the North of Mennekrath and secure the first objective--the road and railroad running east to west thru M Gladbach-Rheindahlen. Task Force Dickinson was to operate in the left zone and Task Force Anderson in the right zone, Rheindahlen being inclusive to the latter. Intermediate resistance was to be by-passed if necessary.

The entire night was spent in resupply and reorganization of the combat forces. It was impossible to secure enough ammunition to replace all that expended during the day, even though kitchen trucks and all available vehicles had been filled with ammunition. However trains with available ammunition, gasoline, food, and water were assembled at Hottorf and then taken forward with considerable delay because of the congestion on the roads caused by the 102nd Inf Div and Corps Artillery traffic. Supplying of vehicles and men was completed at 0645. Relief of Company Task Forces was completed at 0530 and Task Force Hedlin rejoined Task Force Wilson at 0630. The following plan of operation was issued by S-3 for the Battalion Commander, to the Company Commanders assembled at Terheeg at 0400, while their supplies were being distributed.

All action to be deployed cross-country with the infantry mounted on the tanks. "B" Company married was to cross the LD at

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

0700 and drive for the Battalion objective by-passing resistance where necessary. "C" Companies married were to follow on the same axis protecting "B" Companies' flank and rear so far as possible and be prepared to support "B" Companies or go thru them and continue the attack. Assault Gun Battery, followed by Battalion Headquarters and the Mortar Platoon, was to support the attack from close up moving with the attack as it progressed.

The fire plan was to put a heavy concentration on Herrath starting at 0655 and lasting until lifted by "B" Company. It was then to be put on Rath and Buckholz and from there on call. Fire from the Assault Gun Battery was by direct call from any tank having a transmitter.

A problem presented itself in that the supply of ammunition could not be accomplished because A.S.F.'s were still on the west bank of the Roer River and the traffic conditions would not allow our trains, which were now empty, to resupply us. ~~However~~ All tanks had been modified to carry at least fifty (50) percent more than the basic load. This was almost all expended in the first day's operation and was only partially replaced for this second day's operation. It was impressed upon all that conservation of ammunition was essential.

"B" Companies decided to cover Herrath and Rath with artillery and direct fire and make a dash for Buckholz as an intermediate objective, reorganizing there and moving on the main objective. At 0700 "B" Companies married crossed the LD followed by "C" Companies married. The Assault Guns moved into position south of the LD and prepared to fire. Almost immediately upon crossing the LD heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire was received. AT and AA guns fired on both flanks from the towns of Rath and Herrath. Returning the fire from both flanks with all weapons "B" Companies passed thru the gap between the towns and assaulted and cleared Buckholz of about twenty (20) prisoners. The "B" Company AT Platoon was ordered to clear Herrath and did so capturing three (3) one hundred twenty (120) mm mortars and fifty (50) prisoners.

"B" Companies married rapidly reorganized in Buckholz and, under heavy fire from AT guns on both flanks, moved on Sittard, Schriefers and Sittardheide. Although the last two villages were out of Task Force zone, their overlapping defenses made it necessary to assault them simultaneously. A tank-infantry assault took these positions at 0930, and hastily reorganized, with the loss of one tank although many more were hit. Many German prisoners were dug out of the villages and firing positions containing a battery of light (105mm) and medium (170mm) artillery with huge stocks of ammunition were overrun. Heavy small arms fire was received from the right flank. Heavy AT fire and a great deal of 20mm flak was received from the vicinity of Rheindahlen. Heavy artillery fire was also falling in the vicinity. It is believed that this heavy fire was in preparation for a counterattack since three (3) groups (forty (40) to fifty (50) men each) of German soldiers advanced on the position; but upon being taken under fire they all surrendered.

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

Task Force Dickinson's Force was held up shortly after crossing the LD by boggy ground and an AT ditch extending completely across the sector. They were forced therefore to ~~to~~ pull back and follow TFA in its sector until these obstacles were by-passed. Therefore they were not abreast, as planned, and TFA was brought under heavy fire from both flanks, particularly from the town of Rath. The first platoon of "C" Company married was ordered to clear the east edge of Rath and did so with a tank-infantry assault. Four (4) high velocity 75mm SPAT led by a captured American light tank withdrew from the town to the North towards Rheindahlen. This column of enemy tanks was therefore on the main highway to "B" Company's left rear and abreast of "C" Company. Since the difficulties and delay of TFD were not known, it was thought that these tanks, one of which was identified as American, were part of TFD until they moved into position and opened fire on "C" Company. In the resulting fire fight all enemy tanks were put out of action, but two "C" Company tanks, which were engaging AT gun positions on the other flank, were hit and burned.

As "B" Company's ammunition, at this point, was about depleted "C" Company was ordered to assault Rheindahlen.

Fire of the Assault Guns was brought to bear on suspected tanks and AT guns in the vicinity of Rheindahlen, and an artillery concentration was laid on it. "C" Companies moved on Rheindahlen as TFD, which had now come abreast on the left flank, moved forward. Heavy AT fire from the left flank (later found to be five (5) 88mm guns) and high velocity fire from the right edge of town was so heavy (destroying at least three (3) tanks of TFD) that the attack was called off.

Further artillery and Assault Gun fire was placed on suspected AT and tank positions. The sky having cleared somewhat a request was made for air support.

A Corps TOT was prepared for 1545 to be combined with a bombing and strafing mission by two flights of planes. "C" Companies were to assault the town supported by "B" Companies. At 1530 the tanks had been extricated from the mud in which many had been bogged, the infantry was mounted up, and the Task Force was poised to assault the town. At 1540, five (5) minutes before jump-off time, the Combat Command CO arrived to say that the attack would be made by the 405th Inf Regt (which had moved up to our line) led by our tanks. There was just time to dismount our infantry and the tanks moved out at 1550 with the artillery concentration prepared by the 405th and Corps. Although there was absolutely no time for any liaison whatsoever, the tank-infantry attack proceeded without a hitch. "C" Company attacked to the northeast with the infantry following closely. "B" Company moved to the east then attacked north with their supporting infantry. The tank and artillery fire kept everything well down, and the infantry moved in and cleaned up house by house without any serious opposition. The 405th Inf Regt occupied the town and the tank companies withdrew to an assembly position at Schriefers where they stayed for the night. This ability of strange infantry and tank forces to work together with-

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

out preparation speaks well for the basic simplicity and soundness of tank-infantry training doctrines and fine training of the individuals of both forces.

Heavy concentrations of light AA fire were brought to bear on all the planes that flew over Rheindahlen, but did not impede the aggressive action displayed by our air support. It did however keep our liaison planes from getting close to the town and thus hindered our observation from the air CP's. A counter-flak mission was fired after the AA guns initially opened up and was successful in putting one battery out of action. These AA guns were used earlier in the day to delay our forces.

Artillery support during the day was very inadequate due to poor communications. At the start of the operation each married company had two Forward Observers with them, one from the 71st FA Bn and one from the 695th AFA Bn. Early in the operation the 71st Forward Observer's tank was knocked-out by AT fire. The radio with the 71st FO with "C" Company went out early leaving only the two 695th AFA Bn forward observers who were required to keep one receiver on their Battalion channel and one on the 71st channel, thus leaving no communications between the company and the observer. This set-up required the Company Commander or Platoon Leader to dismount from his tank, go to the FO's tank and tell him where to place the fire. Calls for artillery fire through the command channels were not satisfactory as too many relays were necessary and the resultant delay permitted the enemy to change positions.

Supplies of gas and ammunition were brought up during the day with much difficulty. Resupply was accomplished by pulling one platoon at a time back of a small screen of trees and filling them.

The Battalion CP was with the Assault Guns about one thousand (1,000) yards in the rear of the line companies.

Enemy losses for the day were:

- 4-75mm SPAT guns
- 1-M5 American light tank (used by the enemy)
- 14-AT guns (75 and 88mm)
- 3-120mm mortars
- 3-150mm guns
- 3-105mm guns
- 1-Mk IV tank
- 3-4 gun 20mm flak guns
- 250 PW's (processed through 102nd Inf Div)
- Number killed--unknown

Our losses for the day were:

- 4 tanks destroyed
- 2 half tracks destroyed
- 4 tanks damaged
- 2 half tracks damaged

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is essential at all times to have a reserve regardless of size or disposition of your forces.

Evacuation of the wounded was difficult because the wheeled vehicles could not cross the soft ground. Two cargo carriers (L29), which were requested but not received, would greatly have helped in this vital phase of operation.

Speed of movement cross-country is very necessary and greatly reduces losses when your flank is exposed. It is not possible to clear towns or strongly dug-in positions when the objective is far distant. This has to be accomplished by dismounted infantry following closely behind the tank unit.

In a rapid advance it is not possible to check gun positions after you have killed or overrun the personnel manning them. It is necessary for the following infantry or specially designated troops to dismantle or destroy all weapons, lest they be used again by infiltrating troops or civilians.

Cross-country movement by wheeled or half track vehicles should not be attempted where the ground is soft, because if they bog down they are easy prey for AT guns. The infantry should be mounted on the tanks and their vehicles brought up by road as soon as the way is cleared.

In spite of the heavy vehicular losses of seven (7) tanks, six (6) half tracks and one (1) 1/4 ton C and R destroyed and six (6) tanks and six (6) half tracks damaged, the personnel losses were comparatively light: six (6) killed and forty-one (41) wounded during the two days. The low proportion of personnel casualties is attributed to the following:

(1) Failure of the German Infantry to standby and fight. Many gave up on the approach of the tanks and most of the balance were rounded-up by our infantry with little resistance.

(2) The boggy condition of the ground made almost all the German mortar and artillery shells explode with "mine action" so that the very heavy concentrations produced few casualties. Time after time shells went off within a few yards, or even feet, of soldiers with little or no effect.

(3) The speed of the advance exposed soldiers to fire for a minimum of time, allowed the enemy little time to adjust fire, and finally resulted in overrunning a 120mm mortar battery and at least one battery each of light and medium artillery.

Heavy ammunition expenditure is necessary in driving action, and every means must be exploited to facilitate resupply. Kitchen trucks, in addition to all organic transportation, were utilized; but this proved inadequate.

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After Action Report For February 1945 (cont.)

It is believed that the mission of taking a town of the size of Rheindahlen, population ten thousand (10,000), was not an appropriate job for an armored unit of this size. To attack it would have exposed both flanks and this unit alone would have rattled around in the town like a pea in a pod. We could secure the approaches; but the clearing of the town should initially have been assigned to the infantry.

Leroy H. Anderson
LEROY H. ANDERSON
Lt Col, Inf.
Commanding

4 Incls:
S-3 Record of Events
S-3 Journal
S-2 Journal
Overlays

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HEADQUARTERS 81ST TANK BATTALION
A.P.O. No. 255
U.S. Army

SUBJECT: After Action Report for Month of March 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.
(Thru Channels)

In compliance with Par 10 (C3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted:

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Losses in Action:

Personnel: 1 wounded
Vehicular: None

Commanding Officers:

Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Comdr
Capt Ralph R. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co
Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010603, Co B/81
1st Lt Warren A. Hedlin, Inf., 0441290, Co B/15th AIB
Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co C/81
Capt Jack Rice, Inf., 0413169, Co C/15th AIB
Capt Harold Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co D/81
Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
Capt Marion B. Hook, MC, 0418969, Med Det

Attachments and Assignments:

Companies "B" and "C", 15th AIB Attached

Movements, Boundaries, and Command Posts:

See Overlays

Ammunition Expenditures and Losses:

1,875 rounds HE-76mm Expended
1,865 rounds HE-75mm Expended

This Task Force, commanded by Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, was assembled on 1 March having just completed a successful advance from the Roer River. At 0010 the Task Force Commander received orders to send one married company to relieve elements of the 406th Inf Regt at roadblocks in the vicinity of Institution (coord 058867, map R1, 1/100,000) and to move the remainder of his task force to the same vicinity the following morning. The purpose of the road blocks was to protect the left flank of the 29th Inf Div moving up from the South to Munchen Gladbach.

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After Action Report for Month of March 1945 (cont.)

At 0100, 01 March 1945 the Task Force Commander called the "C" Company Commanders together and issued his instructions. "C" Companies (married) were to move immediately to Institution and relieve the elements of the 406th Inf Regt, contacting the C.O. before arrival of companies to get their dispositions so as to effect the relief without loss of time. The balance of the Task Force would remain in its present position until 0800 at which time it would move to the vicinity of Institution. "C" Companies moved out at 0200 Capt Guthrie, commanding C/81, going ahead to make arrangements with the 406th Inf Regt. The relief was completed at 0400 with one married platoon setting-up the roadblocks, and the balance of the married companies being held in reserve in the vicinity of Kothausen. No contact with the enemy was made. At 0800 the balance of the Task Force moved to assembly positions in the vicinity of Kothausen awaiting further orders.

At 1000 "C" Companies (minus) moved to Institution to assemble in preparation to clean out the town of Hehn and the area NE to the railroad. The Task Force Commander issued his orders to "C" Companies at 1200. Capt Rice was to take his infantry company and clear the Village of Hehn and the area up to the railroad where he was to take up defensive positions until relieved. Capt Guthrie was to support with direct fire from his tanks which were in position to cover the infantry's advance. At 1400 the infantry moved out without opposition and searched all houses and the area up to the railroad without contact with the enemy. They blocked the roads and set-up positions along the railroad. At 1715 contact with the 29th Inf Div was made in the vicinity of the railroad.

At 1700 the Task Force was given orders to relieve roadblocks in the vicinity 055868, 054875, 058901 (map R1, 1/100,000) maintained by the 405th Inf Regt. Relief was accomplished by "B" Companies (married) at 2100. At 1200, 02 March the balance of the Task Force moved to Institution. "C" and "B" Companies were relieved of all blocks and moved into Institution which was formerly a Luftwaffe Air Base. The front was moving forward very fast, by evening this Task Force plus the balance of Combat Command "B" was in the Army Service Area.

At 1800, 03 March this Task Force received warning orders to move that night to the vicinity SW of Kempen via a route shown on overlay. Orders were received to move at 2300. The Task Force coiled at 0230, 04 March 1945. At 1200, 04 orders were received to occupy Oedt with a detachment to occupy Mulhausen and start Military Government procedure with these villages. Occupation was completed by 1600. The following days were spent in supervising a large area in Military Government work, maintaining vehicles, conditioning troops, and generally preparing for future operations.

On 24 March 1945 orders were received to move a company of tanks to firing positions in the vicinity of Nehlenbroich (five kilometers NW of Dusseldorf) to thicken the fires of the 71st AFA

-2-
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11

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After Action Report for Month of March 1945 (cont.).

Bn; and to alternate companies daily moving in and out of position under cover of darkness. This firing and activity was to give the impression of a build-up in that area. This was continued up to 29 March 1945 when orders were received to assemble the Battalion and prepare for operations.

On 30 March a meeting at CC*B Headquarters was held where plans for the coming operation were unfolded. The Task Force was to be constituted again and was to move to assembly positions just west of Munster in preparation to drive on Hannover and Berlin.

On 31 March at 1115 the Task Force moved from Oedt in a Northeasterly direction crossing the much talked of Rhine River at Wesel, and proceeded to an assembly position in the vicinity of Appelhusen (see overlay) directly in rear of the British who were working Eastward towards Munster. The Task Force prepared to move on their assigned mission the next day.

Comments:

Section I--Personnel Matters:

Morale of troops--excellent.

Reinforcements received--21. These men proved to be very satisfactory.

Awards--30 Bronze Stars
4 Silver Stars
5 Purple Hearts

Losses--KIA None
Wounded 1

Section II--Intelligence:

Ten (10) prisoners were taken. These people were stragglers from the German Army.

Section III--Operations:

It was found upon talking with Officers of the Second Armored Division that they were highly pleased with the effect of putting sand bags on their tanks, both front and sides, to affect to a degree the impact of the German high velocity guns, Panzer faust, and bazookas. Upon discussing it with company commanders they too were of the opinion anything that would help protect the tanks was worth doing, and that the added weight would not hinder the tank's mobility. Work to that end was started while at Oedt, and before moving out seventy-five percent of our tanks were sand-bagged. It was, if nothing more, a big morale booster to all tank men.

Section IV--No Comment.

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After Action Report for Month of March 1945 (cont.)

Section V--Civilian:

Civilian morale in villages we occupied was very high probably due to the fast moving operations which left their villages intact and untouched by the ravages of war.

Leroy M. Anderson

LEROY M. ANDERSON
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding.

3 Incls:

1. S-3 Record of Events
2. S-2 Journal
3. Overlays

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REPORTING OFFICER'S NAME AND GRADE
U.S. Army

SUBJECT: After Action Report For Month Of April 1945.

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D.C.
(Three Channels)

In compliance with Par 10 (G3) AR 345-105, the following After Action Report is submitted:

Campaign of "Western Europe".

Losses in Action:

- (1) Personnel: 1 Officer KIA; 1 Officer and 3 Enlisted men WIA.**
- (2) Vehicular: 1 Med tank disabled (later recovered and returned to duty).**

Commanding Officers:

Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, Inf., 0239452, Bn Comdr
 Capt Ralph E. Power, Cav., 01011841, Hq Co
 Capt Weldon W. Wilson, Inf., 01010605, Co B/81
 1st Lt Warren A. Hedlin, Inf., 0441290, Co B/15th AIB
 Capt William L. Guthrie, Inf., 01011984, Co C/81
 Capt Jack Rice, Inf., 0413169, Co C/15th AIB
 Capt Harold Schiering, Inf., 01012466, Co D/81
 (Hospitalized 6 April 1945)
 1st Lt Jacob H. Werner, Inf., 01012660, Co B/81
 (Assumed command of Co D/81 6 April 1945)
 Capt Victor W. Markov, Inf., 0452178, Sv Co
 Capt Marion B. Hook, MC, 0418969, Med Det

6/9/2

Attachments and Assignments:

Companies "B" and "C" 15th AIB attached, one (1) platoon Co "B" 628th TD Bn attached, one (1) platoon (minus) Co "B" 22nd Eng Bn attached.

Movements, Boundaries, and Command Posts:

(See attached maps and overlays)

Annotation - Report of Losses:

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED TO:

(1) Losses

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

W.A. Carter *ALM-1* **FOR THE**
DECLASSIFYING COMMITTEE 29 Jan 1966

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After Action Report for April 1945 (cont)

Expenditures:

Shell, 105mm How., HE	384 rds
.. 105mm How., WP	10 ..
.. 76mm Gun, HE, a/c M48	942 ..
.. 76mm .. APC, M66A1	205 ..
.. 75mm .. HE, a/c M48	707 ..
.. 75mm .. APC, M61, M66A1	108 ..
.. 75mm .. WP, M57	52 ..
.. 57mm .. HE	28 ..
.. 81mm Mortar, HE (light)	104 ..
Grenade, Hand, Frag.	250 ea
.. Smoke, WP, M15	120 ..
.. Incendiary	80 ..
Cart. Cal. 50 MG	11,340 rds
.. .. 45 Ball	1,000 ..
.. .. 30 MG	97,750 ..
.. .. 30 Carbine, M1	2,100 ..
.. .. 30 Rifle, 8/clip	1,200 ..

This Task Force, commanded by Lt Col LeRoy H. Anderson, was assembled in the vicinity of Appelhulsen, Germany 1 April 1945. Overlays were received which showed the mission of Combat Command "B" and the assigned zones and objectives of each Task Force in the Command. The objectives were numbered and the principal objective was Hannover (see attached maps showing zone of Task Force Anderson, route followed, and progress made daily). Each company received a copy of the overlays in addition to maps up to and including Hannover.

At 0700 orders were received from CC"B" for TFA to seize and secure a crossing of the Dortmund-Ems-Canal so the Combat Command could by-pass Munster and gain their respective zones to begin operations towards Hannover. Orders were issued to the Company Commanders of the Task Force at 0900: "The Force moves at 1100 to seize and secure a crossing of the Dortmund-Ems-Canal. "C" Companies (married) will lead the Force finding a route that is passable keeping North of main road along canal and try to seize a bridge intact. Report at check points (see map) are to be made. B/85 will report on bridges as they continue their advance along the canal."

"C" Companies moved out at 1100, following a route (see maps) over which they experienced a little difficulty over creeks in the vicinity, and had just found a route that was passable when orders were received to halt the Force in place as a change in plans was in progress and would be sent down to us. The change caused us to cross a pontoon bridge, laid by CC"B" four (4) kilometers East of Senden, and to follow the balance of the Combat Command. The crossing was without incident and the Task Force coiled for the night in the vicinity of Venne. Orders received during the night instructed us to continue our advance following

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After Action Report for April 1945 (cont)

Task Force Dickinson to a point where we would be ordered to get into our assigned area. We followed TFD to Sassenburg where we were instructed to turn North and proceed on our mission. After refueling "C" Companies again started to lead the Task Force North into our zone, thence East on our mission. (Route shown on map). There was no contact with the enemy except isolated PW's who ran into road blocks left to cover the Task Force when it turned from North to East. One hostile SP gun, which fired on our lead tank as it approached Veremald, disabled the tank. In an attempt to get away the SP gun bogged down in a creek where the crew destroyed it and escaped. The Task Force coiled for the night and plans for the next day's operation were made.

The next day's operation was to be led by "B" Companies and the initial plan called for "B" Companies to seize the passes and establish a tankhead, in the vicinity of Borgholms, until the balance of the Task Force moved through. At 0800 we received word that TFD had already gone thru the pass and we were to follow. TFD was to move back into its zone upon clearing the pass. Our Task Force ("B" Companies leading) continued on (see map for route) meeting no resistance, overrunning all positions and flushing out isolated small groups of AA personnel who had deserted their positions. There was quite a bit of rail way equipment destroyed and taken including locomotives, boxcars of ammunition and steel. At 1700, upon reaching the pass at Bergkirchen (before Minden and the Weser River), the leading platoon reached the top of the pass without opposition. From here the whole of the valley (with its roads and hamlets, and Minden in the distance) was in view. The road down to the valley was steep and winding with little cover and little room for maneuvering. No activity was visible, and since it was intended that the Task Force secure a tankhead and move into the valley as quickly as possible, the platoon moved down the road and into the valley. Because of surprise, or because they wanted to trap us, the enemy allowed the tanks to debouch onto the plain before they opened fire with artillery and antitank guns from the front and both flanks. The tanks returned the fire and availed themselves of what little cover was at hand. Additional tanks were placed to utilize the cover of buildings on the forward slope of the hill to fire on targets of opportunity. The field artillery observer brought fire on observed and suspected targets. A number of German vehicles, including large trucks and trailers, started to use the road, backing from house to house, and working toward Minden. Some of these were knocked-out by our fire. It was too late in the evening and the fire was too heavy to attempt a push through; so the Task Force coiled south of the pass in the vicinity of Bergkirchen. The leading platoon was to remain in the pass consolidating their positions, the balance of the company to withdraw to the Task Force bivouac. A fire plan, for interdicting heavily through the town of Minden, road intersections, and the bridge across the Weser, was drawn up and put into effect. It was reported to Combat Command HQ that the pass was well defended and air support for the next day's operation was requested.

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After Action Report for April 1945-(cont)

Orders were received during the night to sit tight until Higher Hq had an opportunity to issue an ultimatum to Minden to surrender.

At daylight 4 April "C" Companies sent a platoon to West pass which they secured without contacting the enemy. The liaison plane of the 47th AFA Bn went up early in the morning to try to locate the gun positions. This mission was quite successful as a flak position of six 88mm guns was located in the vicinity of Dutzen (765085) which was fired upon and completely neutralized. A 75mm gun in the vicinity (740098) was also destroyed by our artillery. No fire was received in the passes after these guns were neutralized. At 1400 "C" Company's Platoon reported a strange armored column moving towards Minden, suspected to be British. A section of tanks was ordered down to identify and make contact if they were friendly. At 1430 a report came that they were elements of the British Second Army and were going into Minden. This information was passed on to Higher Hq. Later that evening liaison with the British confirmed that the bridge over the Weser River was blown as they approached, and all bridges except one over the Weser-Ems-Canal were blown. They were held up outside the town by determined small arms fire, but were planning on going in that evening.

The next morning orders were received to stay in place and comb the woods along the ridge. We stayed in place until 7 April continuing to take prisoners from the surrounding countryside. On 8 April orders to garrison the town of Minden were received. The Task Force remained in the town and the evening of 9 April "C" Companies plus one section of the Assault Gun Platoon were detached to Div Hq for its protection and to constitute its advance guard.

On 10 April 45 orders were received to be prepared to move about 1200. The Combat Command less "C" Companies and one section of Assault Guns from this Task Force were in Division reserve and would follow the Division in its movement. The route was to be the proposed Division "MSR" which was followed quite closely. (See maps) The march was uneventful with no contact. On 12 April at 0500, the "B" Companies were ordered to relieve elements of CG"A" at roadblocks guarding bridges across the Weser-Elbe Canal. The balance of the Task Force, now consisting of Hq, Hq Co, and one platoon of Co "B" 628 TD's continued to follow Div Hq during the day and coiled that night East of Thuritz. During the night orders were received for this Task Force, beginning at daylight, to open up the "MSR" from Packenbusch to the Elbe River. "C" Companies and the section from the Assault Platoon were released back to Task Force control for this operation. Orders were issued that "D" Companies would proceed from their present position at 0700 following the route of the proposed "MSR", cleaning all towns along and adjacent to the route. The Assault Gun Platoon was to follow closely, prepared to give fire support on call. The Mortar Platoon was given the mission of cleaning the towns of soldiers who may be hiding in civilian clothes, and to pick up all weapons which would be turned into the Bürgermeister, on the order of the

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After Action Report for April 45 (cont)

platoon who went into the town first. Bn Hq was to follow the Mortar Platoon and set up in Osterburg after it was cleared.

The operation started at 0700 and proceeded rapidly. One platoon would enter a village encountering no resistance but checking the town; the next platoon would leap frog forward to the next village. "C" Companies were overlooking the Elbe River at 1300 after an advance of twenty six (26) miles. A group of Allied PW's were liberated in the vicinity of Iden when their guards ran away at the approach of our tanks. They were in the process of being marched to the Elbe and thence across towards Berlin. A column of vehicles was waiting at the ferry opposite Sandu when the leading platoon arrived. They appeared to be stalled and, as no activity was observed along the river, a patrol of infantry dismounted and moved to the river bank. There they found about sixty (60) vehicles loaded with army supplies waiting for the ferry which did not come. They saw some vehicles on the far bank trying to get out of a mud hole and opened fire causing the enemy personnel to disperse along the bank. Some small arms fire was returned. A section of tanks was sent down, under cover of the river dike, and took up positions from which they could take the vehicles across the river under fire plus any targets of opportunity. This included quite a few barges, the ferry, and hostile personnel. We duly destroyed the enemy material. We were to pull back to the vicinity of Iden; but before withdrawing the enemy's lead vehicles on our side were knocked-out to prevent them from trying to get them over during the night. Artillery time fire was received over the ferry site just as we pulled out. The Assault Guns registered on the ferry site and prepared interdiction fires for the night. The "C" Companies coiled back at Iden, where the Assault Guns were set-up, and spent the night there. The balance of the Task Force set-up in Osterburg.

The next two days (14 and 15 April) were spent in clearing the towns five (5) kilometers each side of the "MSR" from Osterburg to the River and also to keep patrols on the "MSR". The "B" Companies were relieved at the Weser-Elbe Canal the evening of the 14th. The afternoon of the 15th orders to divorce the companies were received. This was completed about 1300. At 1430 orders were received to send a married company immediately to Winterfeld to be in Corp reserve with the mission of keeping the "MSR" clear of a marauding group or groups of Germans who were known to be in the area. The "B" Companies arrived about 1430 from the Weser-Elbe and after refueling were sent to Winterfeld. The balance of the Task Force, less the Engineers, was to move out at 0800 the following morning (16 April) to Winterfeld. The Task Force less "B" Companies coiled at 1130. At 1245 a report was received that enemy tanks and infantry were in the vicinity of Donitz. The "B" Companies were ordered by Higher Hq to proceed and intercept them. The rest of the Task Force was to follow and support. The Task Force coiled about

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After Action Report for April 1945 (cont)

two (2) kilometers West of Klotze while "B" Companies continued to comb the area in the vicinity of Donitz without finding any trace of an enemy force. Orders were received during the night to move at daylight and set-up roadblocks from Zasenbeck (exclusive) to Brome (inclusive) in order to catch any enemy moving to the Northeast from the woods, as an infantry force was to start cleaning the woods from the South and Southwest in the morning. The Task Force moved at 0645. "B" Companies set-up blocks at Brome and Beritz. "C" Companies set one at Radenbeck. The balance of the Task Force coiled Southeast of Nettgau. Assault Guns and Mortars registered preparing to support all blocks. No action throughout the day took place. At 1600 we were ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Hanumn. The Task Force coiled Southeast of Hanumn at 1730. Orders were received at 2200 to move the Task Force to the vicinity of Stockheim setting up road blocks at Stockheim, Rohrberg, and Mehmke; to counter a threat of an enemy armored column reported moving down from the North toward us with the mission of cutting our supply line and escaping to the Hartz Mountains. "C" Companies put in the blocks at Mehmke and Stockheim. "B" Companies put a block at Rohrberg. The balance of the Task Force plus the balance of "B" and "C" Companies coiled on the Southern edge of Stockheim. The Assault guns and Mortar Platoon registered and prepared defensive fires. Nothing happened during the night.

About 1200 the next day (18 April) three (3) vehicles were reported, by the liaison plane of the 71 AFA Bn, to be stopped on the road leading Southeast out of Lindhof, which he could not identify. A section of "B" Companies was sent out to investigate. As the section reached Jubar, twelve (12) vehicles which looked like tanks went cross country and into the woods North of Ludelsen and were positively identified as hostile. "C" Companies were ordered to send the platoon at Mehmke to Bornsen and a section from Stockheim to Mehmke. The remainder of the "B" platoon at Jubar was sent down to reinforce the roadblock. The TD Platoon, with the AT Platoon of "B" attached, was sent to Ludelsen. The woods now were completely surrounded and the artillery started to work with the cub plane directing its fire. When it quieted down later, the TD's and AT Platoons (dismounted), with a new M26 heavy tank attached, were sent into the woods to see if they could develop the situation. They moved down the fire breaks and met heavy small arms fire which was very hard to locate due to the density of the woods. Two (2) vehicles were located and knocked-out by the M26. At this time word was received that a squadron of planes were in the air looking for work. S-3 Air contacted them and the Horsefly (see attached S-3 Air Report) gave them the situation. Before the planes could work the TD's and AT Platoons had to be withdrawn from the woods. This was accomplished and the planes went to work with bombs, rocket and machine guns. All together there were six flights of four planes each. Results could not be observed because of the smoke and dust. It was growing dark as the planes finished and all blocks were kept in place, plus an infantry patrol on the main road to watch the firebreaks.

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After Action Report for April 45 (cont)

During the night movement of vehicles could be heard in the woods and the artillery fired on the adjustment made by the road-blocks. A report of a large concentration of armor bearing down on Lindhof was received during the night, but as it later developed the artillery placed on that town, pretty well dispersed this concentration. The next morning (19 April) our infantry swept the woods that we had surrounded but found only some knocked-out vehicles. The day was quiet and late in the afternoon the Task Force, less the road blocks of "C" Companies at Mehme and Stockheim and the "B" Company block at Rohrberg, was assembled South of Jubar as it was expected this hostile force would attempt to break through that night at Jubar. As it developed the night was comparatively quiet.

On the 20th of April the Task Force was ordered to clean the woods and seize the Villages of Haselhorst and Lindhof which were in German hands. The "B" Companies, less the one platoon at Rohrberg, started thru the woods at 1000. The Assault Gun Platoon fired in support of this advance. At 1200 planes flying in support of TFD, who was Northwest of us, bombed and strafed a column moving North out of Linhof and reported the town cleared. The "B" Companies continued through the woods and took both villages by 1400. The balance of the Task Force then moved to a position South of Linhof. The "B" Companies were ordered from Stockheim and Mehme to occupy the towns of Diesdorf and Abben-dorf which they did by 1700 without opposition. The following day (21 April) Bn Hq and Hq Co moved to Diesdorf where they stayed thru 24 April. It was found upon inspection of the area which all the proceeding action took place that Division Von Clause-witz could be written off the books as the artillery and Air Corps had done a rather complete job.

The Task Force was relieved of all blocks on 24 April and ordered to move and occupy an area South of the "MSR" (see overlay), setting up Military Government in all towns within the area, and maintaining patrols along thirty (30) miles of the "MSR" from Gifhorn East to Voitze. This function continued through 30 April.

During the latter part of the month the operations were essentially those of "maneuver, block, and occupy". Germans confronted by our tank forces had little stomach for a fight and usually gave up readily. Large numbers of prisoners were taken.

Comments:

Section I--Personnel Matters:

- (1) Morale and discipline: "Excellent"
- (2) Reinforcements: Seven (7) reinforcements were received--1 radio repairman, 1 gunner, 2 tank drivers, 1 cook, and 2 tank comdrs.

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After Action Report for April 45 (cont)

(3) Awards and Decorations: Purple Hearts--Nine.

Section II--Intelligence Matters:

(1) The enemy did not offer any fanatical resistance, as we had heard them state from time to time that they would. Only in isolated cases did the enemy offer any resistance at all, and then it was easily overcome. The engagement with the Panzer Division Von Clausewitz offered the greatest opposition, chiefly because of its numbers, and reasonably cohesive organization. It's apparent lack of training as a division aided greatly in our task of destroying it.

(2) Recap of PW's, number killed, and enemy material or captured:

PW's--1878 (see note)

Killed--18

Material captured or destroyed:

- 2 Motorcycles
- 11 Sedans
- 1 SPAT Gun
- 9 RR Locomotives
- 1 RR train of ammo
- 1 Flak radar station
- 6 75 or 88mm Flak guns
- 69 Trucks
- 5 Trailers
- 2 Halftracks

(Note) Includes 1000 hospital patients.

In addition to the above list, the following was captured or destroyed by combined Air, Arty, our Assault Gun fire, and our advance. Most of this materiel came from the Panzer Division Von Clausewitz:

- 1 Bus
- 1 FW 190 Airplane
- 11 Halftracks
- 5 Armd Recon Cars
- 2 Tanks
- 28 Trucks
- 6 Sedans
- 1 75mm AT Gun
- 6 Volkswagons
- 2 SPAT Guns
- 1 Personnel Carrier
- 5 Trailers
- 3 Motorcycles

Section III--Operations: No Comment.

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After Action Report for April 45 (cont)

Section IV--Supply and Maintenance Matters:

The Task Force had received three M26 General Pershing tanks, one of which was employed for the first time on a very limited scale in the woods southeast of Lindhof. Although the evidence is not conclusive, the Command is inclined to believe that the new type tank is equal to any equipment of a similiar nature.

Due to the rapid advance of the Task Force the supply lines were always overextended, but in no way hindered the carrying out of the mission. At one stage of the operation it was necessary to dispatch the empty fuel and lubricant trucks back to Buckberg, the nearest Army class III DP, which entailed a round trip of 320 miles. Upon reaching the line of departure 15 miles West of Munster, the kitchen trucks were converted into additional fuel trucks, thereby enabling the Task Force to commence the operation with eighteen fuel trucks. In order to stave off a dearth of small arms ammunition, each tank carried on its deck 6,000 rds. of .30 cal. MG ammo upon the departure from Oedt.

Rations presented no problem inasmuch as each vehicle carried a three day supply of emergency rations. For the first time since the Task Force commenced operations on the Continent, the men expressed a tolerance for the "C" type ration--the new one, not the old.

Section V--Civilian:

Civilian morale in villages we occupied was very high probably due to the fact that operations moved so fast their villages were left intact and untouched by the ravages of war.

Leroy H. Anderson
LEROY H. ANDERSON
Lt Col., Inf.,
Commanding

6 Incls:

- S-3 Record of Events
- S-3 Journal
- G-3 Air Report
- S-2 Journal
- Maps
- Overlay

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